

OPPOSITION TO SOVIET SCHEMES

the Allies could have only one effect upon Iranian public opinion, namely, to convince it that Britain was ready to purchase her harmony with Russia by making political compromises and concessions. This alone greatly lowered British prestige in native eyes: and as British propaganda was restrained and defensive. Iranians deduced that the British were obviously in a weaker position and were not to be fully trusted.

The story of the Atlantic Charter is a case in point. The Charter had a tremendous effect on all smaller and oppressed nations. Originally both British and the American propaganda strongly upheld its reassuring provisions. The statement that the Western democracies sought no territorial aggrandizement and that they opposed any forceful changes was greeted as a promise and guarantee of a better future. The great merit of the Charter was that it did not blame any special country in particular, but that it enunciated general principles. In the early stages of the Allied occupation of Iran the Atlantic Charter was given due publicity. When, however, serious disagreements arose between Russia and the West over Polish and other European questions, propaganda in favor of the Charter was dropped and was replaced by emphasis upon Big Three unity. Definite instructions were sent to the Public Relations Office by the British Ministry of Information to soft-pedal Atlantic Charter publicity and to shift, instead, to a more vague "four freedoms" while insisting on the unity of the Allies.¹⁵ As a result the Iranians, who were uncertain of their future, received artificial clichés that filled them with distrust and fear instead of reassurance that their country would be free again. The servility of many individuals toward

the Soviet Union may find its psychological explanation in this fact. The noisily trumpeted enthusiasm of Allied victories over Germany, together with the complacent abandonment of half of Europe to satiate Soviet ambitions, hardly could give encouragement and hope to the Iranians. Hence in many instances instead of finding loyalty and courage, the British found treason and sheer cowardice.

It took skill on the part of local British representatives to reconcile the two contradictory tendencies of their policy: friendship with Russia on a higher level and firmness toward Russia on the Iranian

is Sidney Morrell, *Spheres of Influence* (New York, 1946), p. 72.

[*6i]